



PHARMACEUTICAL SALESMEN SUPPLY INACCURATE INFORMATION TO DOCTORS

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Pharmaceutical companies now spend \$10 billion every year on promoting their drugs. About 25% of this amount goes to pay an army of drug salesmen who regularly visit doctors to push the latest products. There is an estimated ratio of 1 of these salesmen to every 10-30 medical doctors in the United States.

Doctors are commonly provided with a free lunch while they listen to the salesman's presentation. Two medical doctors at the San Diego School of Medicine report that the statements made by the salesmen at these "lunch conferences" are not always accurate. The researchers taped, and later analyzed, all statements made during 13 lunches attended by an average audience of 33 resident physicians and medical students.

They found that 11% of the statements made about the drugs being promoted were inaccurate. All of the false statements cast the drugs in a more favourable light than warranted.

Two of the false statements could actually lead to serious complications if accepted at face value. A survey of the attending doctors showed that 85% thought that the drug salesmen provided useful information and 37% said that the information they provided influenced which drugs they prescribed to their patients.

SOURCE: Ziegler, Michael G., et al. The accuracy of drug information from pharmaceutical sales representatives.

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